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Ashland church takes on 'God-sized' task

By Tony Martin
Associate Editor

"Not only did God save my soul," said Rodney Manning, "but the church saved my life. I don't think I could've survived another winter."

For the members of Ashland Church, Ashland, what began as a response to an obvious physical need ended in a new home — and a new life — for Manning.

Manning was living in a dilapidated house in Snow Lake, near Ashland, "like a caged animal," he said.

By his own admission, Manning was a virtual hermit, living in a house not fit for habitation.

"The roof of the house was at least 50% gone," said Anthony Mitchell, minister of music and youth at Ashland Church. "A tree had fallen on the roof, and over a period of time the roof had just rotted away."

Water flowing into the house caused considerable damage to the flooring. Only a closet stayed dry during rainfall.

Manning slept as best he could under a large piece of plastic sheeting as rain poured in.

He ate one meal a day; the only part of his stove that worked was one cooking eye.

Everett Shoup, a member of Ashland Church, was the first to note Manning's need. He'd watched the deterioration of the home and wondered about the well-being of the 81-year-old who lived alone there.

During the summer he talked with his Sunday School class and the Brotherhood of the church about the possibility of putting a roof on Manning's house.

Manning was known to drive people away who came near his door. John Booth Farese, another member of the church, said, "The Brotherhood got together and decided to approach him through another man at Snow Lake."

Eventually, Manning guardedly agreed to let the church take on the project.

The church realized that the home itself was beyond repair.

In what Bobby Cossey, pastor of Ashland Church, called "nothing short of a miracle," the church, led by the Brotherhood, took on the task of building Manning a brand-new home.

The church managed to convince Manning to move into a



HOME AT LAST — Rodney Manning (right) visits with Bobby Cossey, (left), pastor of Ashland Church, Ashland, and Anthony Mitchell, Ashland Church minister of music and youth. The church built a new home for Manning in two-and-a-half months this summer. (Photo by Tony Martin)

camper provided by a church member while the construction progressed.

"I thought the camper was nice enough on its own!" Manning said, smiling.

In July, the existing house was demolished and the debris hauled away in one day.

"God opened the windows of heaven and blessed us with everything that was needed to complete this project," Cossey said.

A love offering was taken on Sunday morning, August 6, and a benefit fish fry held August 18.

Manning contributed \$4,000 — about half of his life's savings — and the church raised an additional \$6,000.

Some 22 vendors and individuals contributed labor, materials, and furniture to the project.

On the first day of work, 23 volunteers from the church and community pitched in. Over the course of the mission project, the number increased every Saturday until the house was completed in about two-and-a-half months.

Manning now lives in a one-bedroom, one-bath home complete with washer, dryer, refrigerator, and other appliances, and even a front deck with a ramp.

Cossey said the estimated value of the home is nearly \$35,000, but after all donations, the house cost about \$10,000.

The benefits of the project were much more significant than the physical building.

Manning became more talkative and open with those working to build his home. He had many visitors and often the ladies of the church would bring him meals.

Through the relationships that were built, Manning came to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

"This is missions at its best!" said Cossey.

Mitchell said that at no time was Manning pressured to "join the church." He simply responded to the outpouring of love he witnessed, and was baptized soon after his commitment.

"There's seldom a Sunday or Wednesday he misses," Mitchell said.

Mitchell had high praise for his pastor. "Bob has a great gift for motivating people. He worked right alongside all the other men."

Cossey defers. "Our only motive was to meet a great need and glorify God," he said.

"We did learn, though, that even a small church can take on a God-sized project," the pastor pointed out.

Manning leaned back in a kitchen chair and took a long look around his new home.

"A millionaire couldn't ask for a better house," he said.



A BLESSING — Rodney Manning of Snow Lake, near Ashland, stands on the steps leading to his new home built by volunteer labor from Ashland Church. (BR special photo)

WHAT'S IN THE RECORD

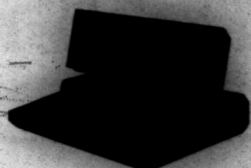
Columbine closure

Directions

Letters to the editor

Baptist Children's Village

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Truth: the first casualty

Warn them before God against quarreling with words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the truth. Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. Their teachings will spread like gangrene. (2 Tim. 2:14-17 NIV)

Paul's words may have been prompted by Hymenaeus and Philetus, two first-century religious leaders who "wandered away from the truth," but the apostle's admonition has the unmistakable ring of relevance today, doesn't it?

If our modern American society has one overarching dysfunction recognized the world over, it must be our tendency toward valueless, ruinous quarreling and godless chatter.

Surely you've noticed.

Television talk shows cater to the lowest common human denominator, lifting up repulsive conduct and offering a national platform to anyone with a demented heart, twisted mind, and minimal vocabulary to defend their poor life choices.

Pop music extols the virtues of violence against women and killing police, and then cloaks such sociopathic behavior in First Amendment arguments over free speech.

Homosexual activists, in their relentless push for special political and social status, blame Christians for facilitating murder against them, when their own behavior has killed far more of them than Christians ever could (even if their allegation was true).

As the fate of the presidency of the last remaining superpower hangs by a thread in courtrooms from Florida to Washington, D.C., highly educated people argue about divining "voter intent" from tiny pinpricks in thin punch cards held up to fluorescent lights.

Is that a dimple in the card, or a preg-

nant chad? Is that chad hanging by one corner or two? Is a sharp stylus better than a blunt stylus? Have the voting machines been cleaned of chads lately? Does the rubber get hard on one side of the voting machine if it's used too much, and does that affect the chads?

Does all of this really make any difference?

In a country that endlessly debates the meaning of "is," anchors its conduct on whether there is any "controlling" legal authority," declares infanticide to be reproductive choice, and questions whether adultery actually debases the highest office in the land, it certainly does make a difference.

Truth, it seems, is usually the first casualty when we go to war to get our way. Will we say anything to come out on top, to acquire whatever it is we lust after in our hearts? Is truth what we make it, at the particular time we're making it up?

Sadly, the answer is almost always yes when it comes to our public life — and in a great deal of our private dealings, too.

Paul has further words for people like us:

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abu-

"SISTER LOIS WANTS US TO PRAY FOR THE CHAD FAMILY. IT SEEMS ONE IS PREGNANT WHILE ANOTHER IS HANGING OR GOING TO THE GALLOWES OR SOMETHING. ANYWAY, PEOPLE ALL OVER FLORIDA ARE CONCERNED."



sive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God — having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them. (2 Tim. 3:1-5 NIV).

What a stinging indictment. Can a more accurate description of America be found anywhere? Isn't it time that we turned from our evil ways, repented of our sins, and lived the lives God always intended for us?

Such a movement can only start within the Christian community. May we first remove the plank from our own eye (Matt. 7:3-5), and then get down to the business left to us by our Lord and Savior (Matt. 28:18-20), before it's too late.

It really is that simple.

GUEST OPINION:

A legacy of prayer and giving

By Wanda S. Lee, executive director
Woman's Missionary Union of the
Southern Baptist Convention

lifestyle in many ways but she was most known as a prayer warrior.

As a member of Women on Mission, she kept our organization focused on intercessory

prayer. When a need arose, she started the prayer chain, wrote down the request, and prayed until an answer came.

She cared deeply about the missionaries. Her prayers allowed her to partner with them in min-

istry around the world.

She cared about her church as well. If Miss Edna said she would pray for you, rest assured you were prayed for specifically and by name.

Because of her missions heart, I suspect Miss Edna gave sacrificially to missions as well.

Prayer and giving just seem to go together. Throughout the history of Woman's Missionary Union, stimulating prayer

for missions and missionaries has been a number one priority.

Each December, members of all age groupings in WMU are encouraged to devote a week to learning and praying for missionaries. Our missionaries are giving their best in faithful service. We need to give our best in faithful praying and sacrificial giving.

Together we enable the message of Christmas to be spread around the world.

I will miss Miss Edna during this year's Lottie Moon luncheon at my church. I will especially miss her prayers. I was fortunate to be among those Miss Edna prayed for every day.

When they found her in her room at the retirement complex, she was lying peacefully in her bed with her Bible open and her hands folded as if in prayer. Her example of a life filled with the spirit of giving all year will forever be with me.

The loss of a prayer warrior leaves a void for our missionaries. Will you take up Miss Edna's place in praying and giving to missions?

Experience the true meaning of Christmas this month as you discover the joy of missions.

Ministry carries women's influence to world

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (BP) — Ministering to internationals from around the world isn't solely a matter of fulltime missionary work on an international field such as Africa, Romania, or Chile. Twenty-five years ago, a small group of Baptist women found an international mission field in central Arkansas.

Because of an influx of Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees who spoke little or no English, interested church women met in the summer of 1975 at Pulaskey Heights Church in Little Rock to discuss opportunities to reach internationals in the area. Those signing up to become involved in Friendship International, the name selected for the organization, were asked to befriend an international woman and try to meet her needs in adjusting to central Arkansas and American culture.

Established as Friendship International's threefold purpose: 1) to meet basic needs of the internationals, discover new friendships, improve English, develop creative skills, help children adjust to American schools, gain a better understanding of American culture and social customs, and learn about Christianity from concerned friends; 2) to provide an opportunity for those who serve in the organization to meet those needs as a ministry of concern in the name of

Christ; and 3) to increase world awareness.

Friendship International's 25th anniversary was celebrated at a banquet at First Church in Little Rock on Sept. 29. One

have been determined to return to their native countries to witness to their families through Bible study."

One class member from Hong Kong first came saying she would check out all religions to determine which she would follow. Robinson was especially pleased when the woman decided to follow Christ.

"Often we attend meetings and do other things feeling we are just spinning our wheels or wasting our time, but I have never felt that way about the time I have invested in

ministering to internationals," Robinson said.

Irene Murphy, who came to central Arkansas from Germany as an international, has been involved in the ministry of Friendship for 25 years. She expressed a deep gratitude to Elaine Moore, who is now living in Tuscaloosa, Ala., for being the first American woman to recognize the internationals' loneliness, their need to be understood and their need for friends.

"Moore was the catalyst from which the organization was born and I am so thankful for her and the other Christian ladies who have given so much of themselves by first sharing their love with us and then accepting us with their unconditional love," Murphy said.

She pointed out not only had the American women taught 125 different nationalities representing the four corners of the world, but had assisted them in many ways. They often took them to the grocery store and doctor, and taught their children.

Shedding a few tears, Murphy said she was so thankful the American women had led her to turn her life over to the Lord Jesus Christ.

"They also helped me obtain my citizenship and because they taught me English I was able to attend Mississippi College and graduate cum laude with a degree in history, religion, philosophy, and German," Murphy said. "Many other internationals have not only come to know Christ, but have been able to get their education and become productive citizens as a result of their participation in Friendship."

Murphy, who served for four years as co-director of Friendship International, reit-



SINGING — An international choir, organized this year by Ann Rice (second from left) sang for the first time Sept. 29 when the 25th anniversary of Friendship International was observed. (BP photo)

attending the celebration immediately sensed the organization's threefold purpose had succeeded in building bridges of love and happiness between the internationals and the American women involved in the ministry. The internationals have learned English as a second language, participated in Bible study, and attended classes in citizenship, crafts, cooking, and computer, as well as many other areas of need and interest.

Lil Robinson, a member of Immanuel Church, Little Rock, the only American woman with a 25-year tenure in the program, has taught Bible classes 23 years and served as director for two years.

"The most rewarding aspect of my ministry in Friendship has been seeing some of those in class come to know the Lord," she said. "Some of these



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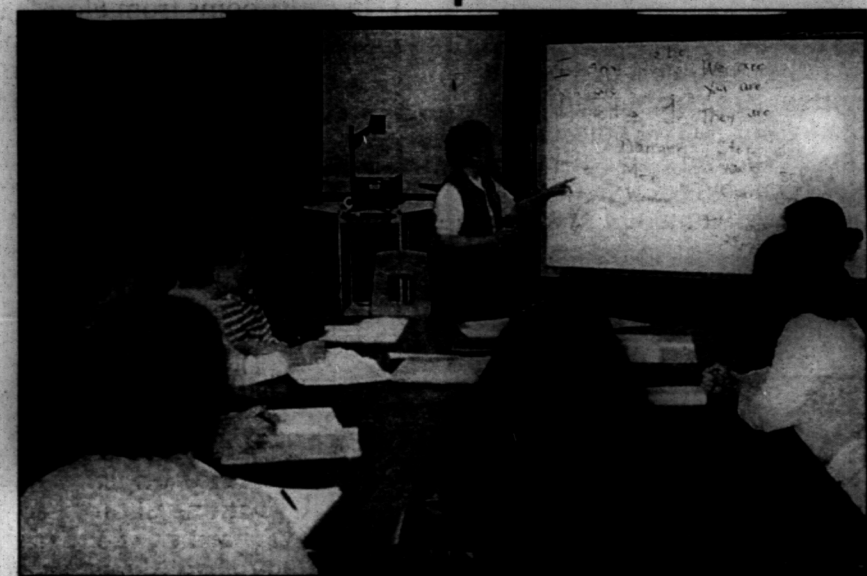
DECEMBER 7, 2000

VOL. 124

No. 43

erated that many who have made professions of faith through Friendship have returned to their native countries to share their faith, thus spreading the ministry's outreach all over the world.

For information on Friendship International, call (501) 376-4791.



TEACHING — English coordinator Betty Perkins teaches class members how to associate words with various signs and signals. (BP photo)

State Baptist schools listed

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Of the 35 colleges, universities, and academies in the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools (ASBCS), 42 are listed in the U.S. News & World Report's 2001 Edition of America's Best Colleges. And all three of Mississippi's Baptist-affiliated schools are included.

Five ASBCS institutions are ranked in the top 100 in the South: Samford (5th), Mercer (24th), Mississippi State (31st), Belmont (103rd), and Mississippi College in Clinton (104th).

Two ASBCS schools were listed in the top 100 in the South Region: Mississippi State and Mississippi College. The top three Southern Baptist Regional Universities are Mississippi State, Mississippi College, and the University of Mississippi.

Five member schools were listed in the top 100 in the Southern Baptist Regional Liberal Arts Colleges. In the South, the top three are Mississippi's Blue Mountain College in Oxford, Campbellsville University, and Virginia International College.

U.S. News & World Report evaluates schools on their identification in the categories of liberal arts, research, and foundation for the advancement of the field.

There are four major categories of liberal arts colleges: National Liberal Arts Colleges, Regional Liberal Arts Colleges, Southern Baptist Regional Liberal Arts Colleges, and Southern Baptist Regional Liberal Arts Colleges.

The Regional Universities and Regional Liberal Arts Colleges are ranked within the four geographic regions: Midwest, South, and West.

Looking back

10 years ago

The Broadcast Services Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board hosts a national satellite broadcast of the program, The MVP Spirit, on the American Christian Television System (ACTS). The program spotlights athletes who have made Jesus the "MVP" in their lives.

20 years ago

Dwight Massengill of Rienzi, a student at Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth, reports on his summer effort to plant a new Southern Baptist Church in Powhatan, Ohio. The new church is being sponsored by First Church in nearby Woodsfield, which is pastored by Waynesboro native Tommy Mills.

50 years ago

The Brotherhood Secretaries of the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting in Biloxi with the highest attendance ever recorded, elects Mississippi Brotherhood Secretary W.R. Roberts to serve as president of the organization. He succeeds Oklahoma Brotherhood Secretary J.A. Pennington.

Columbine father reaches closure over loss

CBF-MS seeking coordinator

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Mississippi (CBF-MS) is searching for a full-time coordinator to head the organization. The search is being conducted by a six-member committee led by Jane Allison of Hattiesburg, CBF-MS moderator.

Bradley Pope of Clinton, who has been working as part-time coordinator since 1997, plans to retire from that role.

Allison said the committee is searching for a "visionary leader" who will guide CBF-MS into a new era of growth and expansion of ministry. The search is not limited to male or female, clergy or laity, young or old.

Copies of the position description are available on request.

Recommendations and resumes should be sent no later than January 10 to Allison at 12 Sharmont Drive, Hattiesburg, MS, 39402. Allison can also be reached by e-mail at jallison@c-gate.net or by phone at (601) 261-3429.

Other members of the committee are Jean Daniel of Starkville, Ken Redford and Jim Newton of Clinton, Rebecca Wiggs of Jackson, and Andy Pittman of Maben.

HANNIBAL, Mo. (BP) — "What a difference one person can make," said Darrell Scott, referring to his daughter, Rachel Scott, a victim of the 1999 Columbine High School shootings in Littleton, Colo.

Speaking to a crowd of more than 600 at Hannibal-LaGrange College's 59th annual Booster Banquet Nov. 17, Scott was greeted by a standing ovation. After showing an eight-minute video recounting news clips and other images of that fatal day in 1999, Scott said, "We're now going to move from tragedy to a story of triumph."

Sharing from diaries left by Rachel, Scott noted what he believes are prophetic overtones in his daughter's writings, allowing closure in his own life after her death. Months before she died, Rachel wrote, "I'm dying.... It isn't suicide. I consider it homicide. The world that you [society] created has led to my death."

Said Scott: "I challenge leaders not to put a Band-Aid on deep, gaping wounds, but to look deeper to the influences of the heart." Noting that many national leaders call for gun control and armed guards in schools as a solution to youth violence, Scott said he believes those are not the right solutions.

"We know that the influences of our lives do affect us," said Scott, referring to Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, the teenage gunmen at Columbine. Scott claimed Harris and Klebold often played violent video games and watched violent movies. Families have an important role in influencing youth, Scott said, but he also stressed the importance of a strong moral education system.

"I see Eric and Dylan as victims of the world we've created," Scott said. Harris and Klebold took their own lives after killing 12 students and a teacher during their shooting rampage.

Rachel had shared Christ with Dylan and Eric three weeks before they shot her.

"I dare believe I can start a chain reaction through acts of kindness," Rachel wrote in her diary. She had made a commitment to reach the unreached in her school, including handicapped and new students, as well as those who were often teased by others.

On April 20, 1998, exactly a year before her death, Rachel wrote, "It's like I have a heavy heart.... I lost friends at school. Now that I've begun to walk my talk, they make fun of me.... If I have to sacrifice everything, I will.... If my friends have to become my enemies to be with my best friend, Jesus, that's fine."

Rachel had dreams of becoming an actress and a missionary. Through her death, her father feels she has fulfilled her purpose, reaching large audiences with her message of kindness and love, with thousands of young people having accepted Christ after hearing Rachel's testimony through his presentation.

In May 1999, Scott spoke in Washington, D.C., to the House Judiciary Committee. In his speech, he called for changing the violent state of the nation through "humble acknowledgment that this nation was founded on the principle of simple trust in God."

During the Hannibal, Mo., Baptist college banquet, Scott said, "In this country, we're willing to look everywhere for solutions. We should take heed to the fact that

SEEKING CLOSURE — Sharing from diaries left by his daughter, Rachel, Darrell Scott noted what he believes are prophetic overtones in his daughter's writings, allowing closure in his own life after her death. Months before she died, Rachel wrote, "I'm dying.... It isn't suicide. I consider it homicide. The world that you [society] created has led to my death." (BP photo)

youth are crying out for moral guidance.

"I'm asking for freedom of religious expression; I'm not asking for prayer back in schools," Scott said.

The father said he is determined to let his daughter's story be one of victory, not defeat. "The world that we've created has caused some problems," he told the audience. "I encourage you to make a difference."

Pastors: racism stand leads to changed community

KIRBYVILLE, Texas (BP) — Two Southern Baptist pastors who have taken stands against racism during the past year say no dramatic results emerged, but they still see tangible signs of success.

"Jasper County's atmosphere has changed," said Charles Burchett, who spearheaded a resolution passed by the Sabine Valley Association to oppose the Christian Identity Movement and "Covenant Theology."

The October 1999 resolution noted that east Texas is being used to enlist and train white supremacists, which has had "hideous and malicious" manifestations. The association's area encompasses Jasper, the town where an African American man was dragged to his death from a pickup truck in 1998.

The pastor of First Church of Kirbyville, a few miles from Jasper, said the resolution has had an impact.

"If all we did was pass a resolution, the answer would be no," he said. "But because it's been backed up with lives, more than mine, the atmosphere has changed."

He credits much of that to prayer. The association has sponsored

two prayerwalks, with most participants coming from Jasper County. And, First Church members regularly pray for pastors and government leaders.

The most noticeable difference came to light this fall, said Burchett. A probation supervisor for two neighboring counties asked his sister — a member of First Church — what was different about Jasper.

All probationers there were showing up on time for their appointments and no racial problems were occurring, he told her. Officers didn't know of anything different they were doing than those in the adjoining county.

"She said, 'We have intercessors [from] churches in Jasper County, prayerwalking and praying for officials and political leaders, and God is answering our prayers,'" he recounted.

In southern Arkansas, a stand against a publisher of racist and paramilitary literature also has led to unified prayer — and church growth.

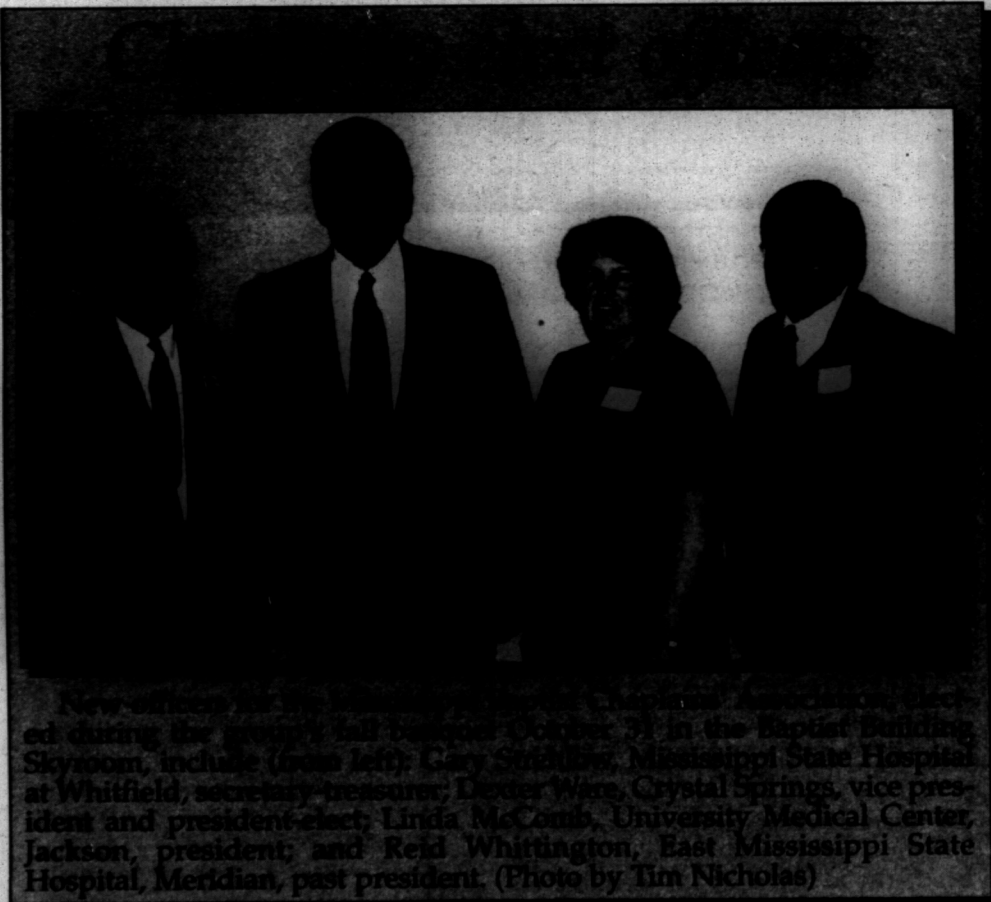
Dwain Miller, pastor of Second Church of El Dorado, said his church has added 125 new members since late last year. He estimated half are new converts to Christ.

The spiritual upswing followed the Baptist pastor's early January sermon decrying the presence in El Dorado of Delta Press.

The televised message stirred up notice, including a front-page story in the only statewide newspaper. While much of the controversy has died down, the pastor said the most important thing to come out of the situation has been a Tuesday time of prayer when 15-20 pastors and laypersons gather at city hall to pray for El Dorado, its pastors and government leaders.

Another church that participates in the weekly prayer meeting also is seeing growth. At First Assembly of God, attendance has been rising since late August, when 600 people responded to altar calls at the church's production of "Heaven's Gates, Hell's Flames." Of those, 340 signed decision cards indicating they had accepted Christ as Savior.

"Spiritually, I feel like there's an opportunity for a greater harvest here because we have come against the strongholds," said First Assembly's pastor, Ron Morris. "Fundamentally, I think people want the truth. People have been inundated with the world's view."



New officers elected during the annual fall meeting of the Sabine Valley Association, held during the pastor's fall banquet Oct. 21 in the Baptist Dining Skyroom, include (from left) Gary Smith, Mississippi State Hospital at Whitfield, secretary-treasurer; Doreen Wynn, Crystal Springs, vice president and president-elect; Linda McComb, University Medical Center, Jackson, president; and Reid Whittington, East Mississippi State Hospital, Meridian, past president. (Photo by Tim Nicholas)

'Left Behind' video available now in stores

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Cloud Ten Pictures, the production company responsible for "Left Behind," a new film dealing with the rapture of the church, has come up with a provocative way to promote the picture before it has a theatrical release.

The producers released the video to stores on Oct. 31.

Cloud Ten is banking on a groundswell of support from the religious community to help spread the word of this film's theatrical debut on February 10. To help guarantee a grand opening weekend, two theater passes will be included with the purchase of each video.

The producers hope that if the Christian community enjoys the video they will give the tickets to non-believing friends and relatives for its theatrical release.

Based on the runaway best selling series of books by Jerry Jenkins and Tim LaHaye, "Left Behind" introduces us to several people abruptly facing an apocalyptic event referred to by religious theologians as the Rapture of the Church.

The film's central characters — journalist Buck Williams played by Kirk Cameron, and airline pilot Ray Steele, played by Brad Johnson — look for answers amid chaos and anarchy after millions of people around the globe suddenly vanish simultaneously.

Buck has been interviewing a Jewish scientist about a breakthrough food growth formula that makes any type of soil arable.

This formula would enable Israel to barter for world peace. In the midst of the interview, a full-scale surprise air attack threatens Israel.

Mysteriously, the attacking planes begin exploding in midair, without a defending shot being fired by the intended victims.

Later, on an overseas flight back to the U.S. in a 747 piloted by Captain Rayford Steel, Buck and others are thrown into turmoil as several fellow passengers instantly disappear.

Ever the professional reporter, Buck begins looking to the scientific and political communities for answers, but it doesn't take long for the astute reporter to realize that the age-old biblical predictions of the rapture are for real.

A confused Ray Steele returns home from the ordeal only to discover that his wife and youngest child also vanished. Reminded of his missing wife's belief in God, he turns to the Bible for understanding. There, Ray finds God's final warnings to mankind that explain the disappearances of his loved ones.

With a \$17-million dollar budget, "Left Behind" is the most expensive Christian

film ever made and the money was well spent. All production values are extraordinary, and some are downright astonishing, considering that similar movies made by Hollywood cost \$50 million and up.

It contains two very important messages: God is ultimately in charge, and we must accept Jesus Christ as Savior.

Best known as the budding con man Mike Seavers on the long-running ABC family sitcom, Growing Pains ('85-'92), Kirk Cameron had this to say about his participation in the making of this unique action thriller: "I think 'Left Behind' is the most important film I've made. Besides being very scary, very dramatic, it has a soul-stirring message."

Several books of the Bible indicate rather strongly that Christ will return like a thief in the night (2 Pet. 3:10, Matt. 25:13, 2 Pet. 3:14, 1 Thes. 5:4, Rev. 3:3, Matt. 24:43-44).

Scripture also warns of specific signs associated with the Lord's return. The incendiary activities taking place right now in the Middle East have once again aroused a great deal of interest in events associated with the end times as described in the Bible.

The producers of this suspenseful and insightful action movie are commissioning viewers to get out the Good News to the world — before it's too late.

Ukraine rally set Dec. 14 in Starkville

A Ukraine Rally for Partnership Missions for region four will be held on December 14 at Calvary Church, Starkville, beginning at 7 p.m., according to regional coordinator Bill Duncan, missions director for Golden Triangle Association in Columbus.

The Mississippi Baptist Convention Board designates nine regions encompassing all of the state, to facilitate the board's work and help form strong local alliances within those areas. Region four consists of Attala, Calhoun, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Clay, Lowndes, Noxubee, Oktibbeha, Webster, and Winston counties.

Thomas and June Nolen, fieldside coordinators for the ongoing partnership between Mississippi and Ukraine Baptists, will be the featured guests at the meeting.

"Everyone is invited to attend who has an interest in our partnership work. We are especially interested in meeting with persons who may want to go on a mission trip to Ukraine next year," Duncan said.

Region four is supporting a pair of church starts in Ukraine — one church in Sonjeyka and one church in Razdelnaia, according to Duncan.

"Each of these churches is making progress," he pointed out. The walls are in place and a roof is being installed on the Sonjeyka church, and the Razdelnaia church is averaging 30 or more people in attendance each Sunday.

For more information on the rally or the region four partnership effort, contact Duncan at 560 Willowbrook Road, Columbus, MS 39705. Telephone: (662) 328-6802. E-mail: gtba@tilc.com

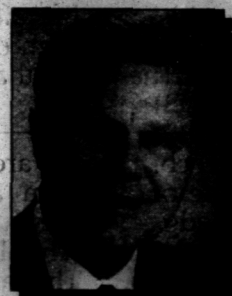
FALLING IN LOVE

I first met her when I was in college. Even back in those days they warned you that when you went to college you might meet the person with whom you would eventually fall in love. The percentages were and are very high that that will happen.

Despite the warnings and the awareness, it still happens to millions of people. The truth is I had heard about her before I really met her. In fact, I had even seen pictures of her before I really knew her.

My folks knew her well and it seemed as though she went to all the places that I did. She was at church and Sunday School. She was at mission organizations and summer camp. She was everywhere, but I really did not know her.

Then, there I was, in my freshman year of college, and POW —



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

I met her! She was just under five feet tall, attractive in an unusual sort of way, and blessed with a Christ-like magnetism. Her name was Lottie Moon!

The reason I met her was because it was Christmas time and all across the campus students and faculty alike were focused on praying for and giving to missions.

There were missionaries on campus sharing what God was doing in their work. There were students, friends of mine, who

were sensing the call of God to pursue missions beyond just where they were. And, there were people giving — thoughtfully giving, intentionally giving, sacrificially giving — through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions. I felt very privileged to meet her.

No, I did not literally meet her because she had gone on to be with the Lord over 50 years before that time, but in a very practical way I had met her. I saw the kind of vibrant, energized love for the Lord that would be translated into a lifetime of love for a lost world. I was touched by the kind of giving that would inspire millions of others to give so that the good news of Jesus might be spread around the world.

I met her and was blessed, challenged, and encouraged to be a part of what God was doing in and through Southern Baptists, and by and with Southern Baptist missionaries,

and I knew I wanted to be a part.

I know her today better than I have ever known her, and rejoice as people across the world join together in the greatest annual mission gift ever known. For the past three years Southern Baptists have given to the Lord and to the world through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering — over \$100 million annually. Mississippi Baptists have been a vital part of this great effort.

I know that many of you know her and share the same heartbeat that she had for missions. It is a glorious time for us to say again, to give again, and to fall in love again — not just with Lottie Moon, but with the Lord who has called us to reach from our Jerusalem to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Doors are open that have never been opened before and opportunities are ours like we have never experienced before. We must capture these moments!

Through our partnership with Ukraine, one story has lodged in my heart and I pray will stay there.

In one of the villages where we helped begin a new work, our Mississippi missionaries presented the Gospel and led a 67-year-old woman to Jesus.

After she was saved and as the missionaries were leaving, this lady, who had lived all of her life under a Christless Communist control, said to them, "I have been waiting for you to come all my life." In thousand of villages like that around the globe, people are waiting for us to arrive. It is time, again, to fall in love!

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Joel and Patty Hinson presented to Tylertown Church, Tylertown, a painting of the first Baptist church in Mississippi on Nov. 15. Pictured are Michael Glenn, pastor; Joel and Patty Hinson; and James Mize, chairman of deacons.

Baptist Health Systems has announced the following additions to its staff: Donald B. Young has joined the staff as director of Business Services. Young goes to Baptist from Medical/Business Resources, Inc. in Denver, Colo., where he served as vice president of finance/operations. He holds Bachelor's and Master's Degrees from Colorado State University, and is a Certified Managed Care Professional and Certified Healthcare Financial Professional. Sandra J. Huff has been named staff chaplain. Huff holds a Master of Arts in Christian Education from New Orleans Seminary, as well as a Bachelor of Arts in Religious Education from Baylor University, Waco, Texas. Huff previously served as director of

the Adult Enrichment Center at Galloway Memorial United Methodist Church in Jackson. Among Huff's previous experience are internships and volunteer ministry positions at Southern Baptist churches in Jackson, Brandon, Brookhaven, New Orleans, La., and Nashville, Tenn.

Parkway Church, Clinton, will present The Greatest Gift, Dec. 6-10, from 6-9 p.m. "Experience the miraculous events of the Christmas story as you drive through and gaze at the eight live scenes, live animals, and Biblical characters dressed true to the time period," said Tommy Sparkman, minister of music. For additional information call (601) 924-9916.

Broadmoor Worship Ministry, Madison, will present "How Do You Welcome A King?" on Sunday, Dec. 17 at 4 and 7 p.m. Dennis Johnsey is pastor. For additional information, call (601) 898-2345.

Christmas Cantata will be presented at Enon Church, Grenada, Sunday, Dec. 17 at 6 p.m. James Earl Turner is director.

Unity Church, Georgetown, will celebrate its 4th anniversary on Dec. 10. Services will begin at 10:45 a.m. followed by lunch. The church was formed on Dec. 15 1996 with 16 charter members. The membership is now 136.

Steve Walker, music evangelist from Pinola, will present a concert of Christmas music on Sunday, Dec. 10, 7 p.m., at Wanilla Church, Lawrence Association. Matthew Snowden is pastor of Wanilla



Branch Church, Morton, recently held a Dedication Day for a new Sunday School building addition, which was built debt free. Pictured cutting the ribbon are honorees Ruth Measels and Earnest Lee Coward. This new addition doubled the amount of Sunday School space for Branch Church.



Note burning service at O'Tuckolofa Church, Yalobusha Association

Church. For more information call (601) 587-0106 or (601) 847-4375.

O'Tuckolofa Church, Yalobusha Association, celebrated a note burning service

on Sunday, Nov. 12. Daniel Dickerson, pastor, has served the church since July 1991. Pictured (from left) are Ralph Norwood, deacon; Charles Heath, deacon; Dickerson; and Horace Hardy, deacon.



GAs (pictured) of Damascus Church, Flora, are Jessica Upton, Nikki Luke, Heather Runnels, Jade Thompson, Brittney McBrain, and Haley Cumberland.



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Michael's Watch

But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you." - Jude 1:9

Michael's Watch is a support group whose sole purpose and mission is to offer emotional, mental, and spiritual support for those whose lives have been affected by family members or loved ones involved in the homosexual lifestyle.

Michael's Watch Group meets the 2nd and 4th Sunday each month at First Baptist Church in Louisville, Mississippi from 3:00 - 4:30 p.m.

Additional information may be obtained by calling First Baptist Church in Louisville, Mississippi at (662) 773-6246.

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What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the

HOUSE TOPS.

Matthew 10:27 NAS

December 7, 2000

HouseTops is a Baptist Record supplement produced by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board's Office of Communication.

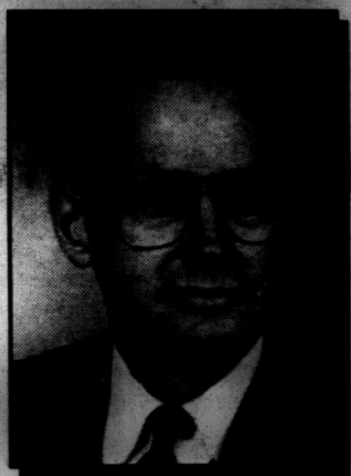
Mississippi Baptist Church Music Conference

February 15-16, 2001

First Baptist Church, Vicksburg

(For all church music leaders and musicians)

Registration: 10 a.m. - 1:45 p.m., Thursday
Conference 1:45 p.m., Thursday thru noon, Friday



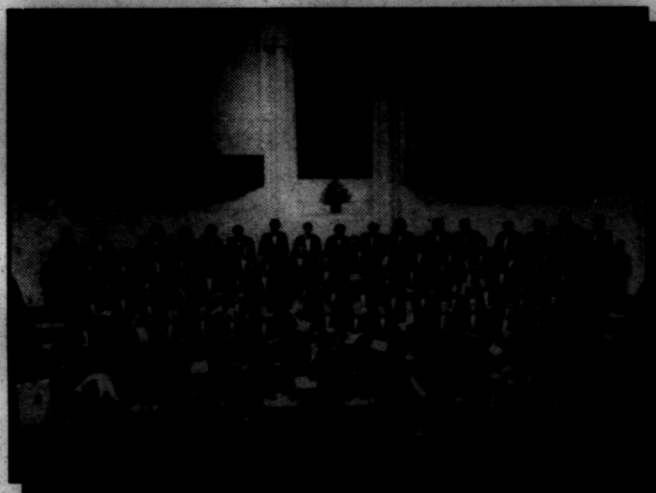
Guest

Albert L. Travis

Professor of organ

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
Noted organist, lecturer, and worship leader

Concert with Singing Churchmen
Thursday evening, 7 p.m.



Mississippi Singing Churchmen

Milfred Valentine
Director

Additional Concerts

The Mississippi College Singers in concert, Thursday, 3 p.m.

Jamie Meaders, Director

Children Choirs of Mississippi in concert, Thursday, 4:15 p.m.

Joanna Hunt, Director

Conference Leaders

Albert Travis, SWBTS

Joanna Hunt, Choral Director at Madison Central High School, Madison

Al Carden, Mississippi Baptist Health Systems, Pastoral Care Department
Jackson

Call 1-800-748-1651, ext. 271 for registration and motel information

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- Family Life Center
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Stewardship Department
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Director, 601-292-3347 or
1-800-748-1651, ext. 347

Challenge to Build

CALLLED TO BE ONE

STATE EVANGELISM CONFERENCE, BROADMOOR BAPTIST CHURCH, MADISON
MONDAY & TUESDAY, JANUARY 15-16, 2001



MONDAY - JANUARY 15, 1:30 P.M.

Welcome Prayer Tommy Jarrett
Introductions
Praise/Worship Gordon Alford
Message Richard Harris
Praise/Worship Gordon Alford
Message Rick Ousley
Praise/Worship Gordon Alford
Message Jim Shaddix

MONDAY - 6:30 P.M.

Welcome/Prayer Dennis Johnsey
Introductions
Praise/Worship Jim Parks
Message Fred Luter
Worship/Praise Jim Parks
Message John Ed Mathison

TUESDAY - JANUARY 16, 9:00 A.M.

Church Growth Dialogue Tommy Mitchell
Fred Luter
Rick Ousley

TUESDAY - JANUARY 16, 1:30 P.M.

Welcome/Prayer
Introductions
Praise/Worship Scott Adkins
Reggie and Ladye Smith
Message Fred Luter
Praise/Worship Scott Adkins
Reggie and Ladye Smith
Message Rick Ousley
Praise/Worship Scott Adkins
Reggie and Ladye Smith

TUESDAY - 6:15 P.M.

Welcome/Prayer Scott Adkins
Reggie and Ladye Smith
Message John Ed Mathison
Praise/Worship Scott Adkins
Reggie and Ladye Smith
Message John Avant



For more information contact the Evangelism Department, MBCB, 1-800-748-1651 or in Jackson 968-3800

2001 Family Adventures

Family Life Conferences

- Tuesday, February 6, Second Baptist Church, Kosciusko
(1-662-289-1766)
Youth - Harvey Ellis, MBCB
Parenting - Don Hicks, MBCB
Marriage - Tim Alexander, Tupelo
Singles-again - Perry Sanderford, Brandon
- Tuesday, March 6, New Hebron BC, (1-601-694-2243)
Preschool/Children Workers - Don Hicks, MBCB
Youth - Harvey Ellis, MBCB
Singles - Glenn Shows, MBCB
Parenting - Dot Day, Hazlehurst
Marriage - Ron Mumbower, Jackson
- Thursday, March 8, Corinth BC, Magee
(1-601-847-2642)
Marriage - Glenn Shows, MBCB
Senior Adults - Glenn Shows, MBCB
Parenting - Dot Day, Hazlehurst
Preschool - Beth Holmes, Clinton

Surviving in Blended Families

- Tuesday, Feb. 20, 7-9 p.m., Rocky Creek BC, Lucedale
with Diane Swain, Little Rock, Ark.

Marriage Enrichment

- Friday and Saturday, Feb. 17-18, 7-9 p.m.
Neshoba Baptist Association Center, Philadelphia
with Loyd and Rita Sweat, Amory: 1-662-656-1820



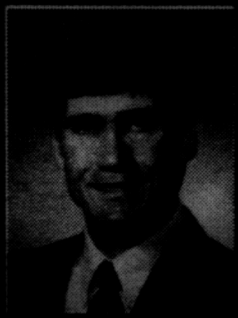
For more information:
Discipleship and
Family Ministries Department
MBCB

1-800-748-1651
968-3800 (in Jackson)

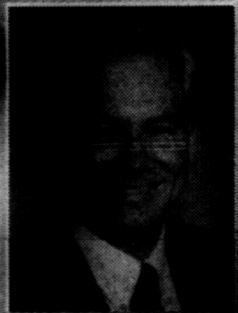
More Than You Can Imagine

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January 26-27, 2001
Country Woods Baptist Church, Jackson

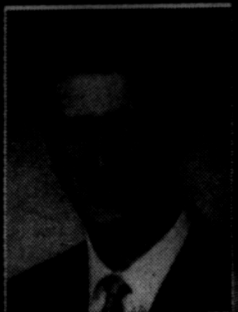
featuring



Matt & Shea Williams
SEC representatives to Southeast Asia & Oceania



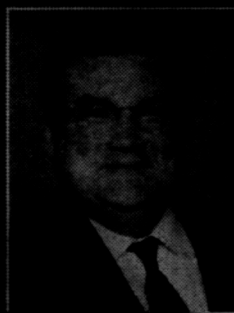
R.T. & Fran Buckley
SEC representatives to Southeast Asia & Oceania



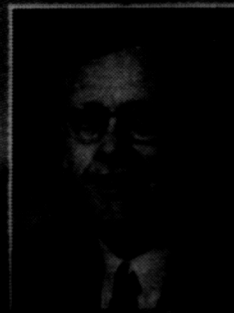
Al & Beth Bailey
SEC representatives to Southeast Asia & Oceania



Wanda S. Lee
Executive Director, Treasurer
WMU SEC



David Michel
Associate Executive Director
Missions & Evangelism, WMU



Larry Cox
Associate Executive Director
Missions & Evangelism, WMU

For more information, please contact the WMU
department at 1-800-748-1051 or 968-1800 in Jackson.

It's for you: www.mbcbb.org

Pray this day for...

December 8-14, 2000

Prayer Ministry Office • P.O. Box 530 • Jackson, MS 39205-0530 • Phone 968-3800, Ext. 304 • Mississippi PrayerLine 1-800-787-PRAY

"Those who have no set time and place for prayer do not pray." Watchman Nee

James Robinson is an association-
al missionary in Bettendorf, Iowa.
He asks us to pray for new
Hispanic work in the Quad Cities
and the ministry at the eighty
truck stops in Iowa. Truckers are
one of the most open people
groups to the gospel in the United
States.

November and December are
months of intense work at the
Baptist Deaf Institute of the
Dominican Republic. Pray that
God will call out new deaf pas-
tors to the deaf as some men
begin a study of the pastoral min-
istry.

Music is an integral part of the
Latin culture, and Missionary
Miriam Nunez is using music to
reach the upper-class communi-
ty of Lima, Peru. Pray for
Miriam and her husband,
Alcides, as they use radio pro-
gramming and Miriam's con-
certs, to spread the gospel.

Missionary David Cox of the
Maasai Team asks you to pray
for abundant rain in Maasailand.
The devastating drought contin-
ues to kill animals and people
across the land.

Bob and Jerry Worley, missionar-
ies to Bosnia on medical leave in
the states, thank us for praying for
them and report that Bob's recov-
ery from surgery continues
unabated, but he is having to deal
with the aftermath. They hope to
return to Sarajevo after the first of
the year. Pray for clear direction.

For (1) African American Church
Leadership Institute, North
Jackson BC, Jackson (Strategic
Missions) (2) Please pray today
for President Kessai Hesa Note
of the Marshall Islands.

8

The North Buenos Aires Team
hopes to start Bible studies in
Argentina's isolated delta islands.
Missionary Annetta Marie
Showden discussed this with a
local priest, who has access to
these people. He offered the use
of the diocese boat to take them
and introduce them to the
islanders. Pray for this outreach.

Deacon Ministry Emphasis

Deacon Ministry Emphasis . . . is a plan with specific actions that highlight deacon ministries and involves deacon training and service.

The Purpose Of Deacon Emphasis Is To:

- Focus on their biblical role
- Build team relationships
- Secure involvement in ministries
- Develop skills for ministry

Deacon Emphasis Week is scheduled for January 14-21, 2001, but a deacon ministry emphasis may be conducted at any time during the year.

To participate, the deacons would choose at least two actions and perform them during a specified time (preferably during *Deacon Emphasis Week*).

See the possible activities listed below. A certificate of recognition will be presented to each deacon body that participates.

Suggested Activities . . .

- Conduct a deacon's retreat or training event
- Conduct Pastor/Staff Appreciation Day
- Conduct prayer/planning retreat with church leaders
- Enter Deacon/Pastor Covenant to work together as partners in ministry
- Subscribe to "The Deacon" or "Growing Churches" magazine for all deacons
- Conduct activities to strengthen church fellowship
- Conduct efforts to reclaim inactive church members
- Conduct an in-house survey of the local church needs and resources
- Conduct deacon-led witnessing/visitation/prospect-find activities
- Assist staff in Discovering Spiritual Gifts study
- Train worship decision counselors
- Enter the Deacon Family Ministry Plan
- Sponsor a special ministry project
- Sponsor a mission trip or tour
- Plan and conduct worship service
- Promote and pray for revival
- View and study video tapes
- Develop committee leadership
- Conduct a demographics study
- Study deacon resource materials

Following participation in Deacon Ministry Emphasis or Deacon Emphasis Week, complete the report form and mail to Church Administration-Pastoral Ministries Department, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530

Deacon Ministry Emphasis - 2001

Pastor	Deacon Chairman		
Church	Association	Church Phone	
Church Address	City	Zip	
Number Active Deacons	Dates of Participation		
Projects Conducted			

*For other projects and
information contact:*

Church Administration
Pastoral Ministries Department
Keith Gordon, consultant
P.O. Box 530
Jackson, MS 39205-0530
(601)968-3800, extension 307
1-800-748-1651

HOUSE TOPS

JUST FOR THE RECORD



Fishermen

Fishermen is a singing/worship group from the Mississippi State University Baptist Student Union (MSU-BSU). Pictured are Jerry Studdard, Columbus; Jordan Haines, Southaven; Stewart Cannon, Lexington; Kathryn Clemmer, Milan, Tenn.; Sissy W. Lindsey, Pulaski; Debra Nugent, Collierville, Tenn.; and Annah Mary Dowdle,

Senatobia. For additional information, contact the MSU-BSU at (662) 323-5761.

Drawn Together is a singing/worship group from the Mississippi State University Baptist Student Union (MSU-BSU). Pictured are Kathryn Hill, Potts Camp; Rebecca Frederick, Columbus; Courtney Tarpley, Houghton, La.; and Aaron Alford, Summit. For additional information about the group, contact the MSU-BSU at (662) 323-5761.

Lena Church, Lena, dedicated its new education building on Oct. 29. Pictured are Ed Mercer (right) chairman of the building committee, presenting the keys to Mike Sherman (left), chairman of trustees. Tom Stevens is pastor.



Drawn Together

The youth of Spring Hill Church, Waterford, conducted a Backyard Bible School at a housing project in Paris, Tenn. There were three professions of faith. Also on the mission trip with the youth were Shannon and Danyel Turner, youth leaders, and Larry Dukes, pastor of Spring Hill Church. This mission trip was a joint effort with New Harmony Church, Paris, Tenn., and pastor, Jeff Hardy, former pastor in Mississippi.



Dedication Service at Lena Church, Lena

MS POSITIONS AVAILABLE

PART-TIME SECRETARY FOR MUSIC MINISTRY. Approximately 20 hours per week. Applicant should have basic musical skills and proficient use of computer word processing. Please submit resume and references to Business Administrator, First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 400, Madison, MS 39130-0400 or fax (601) 856-6177 or email gholder@fbcmadison.org.

PART-TIME YOUTH DIRECTOR position available at Kolola Springs Baptist Church in the Golden Triangle Association. If interested, please call the church office at (662) 356-6037 or mail a resume to Kolola Springs Baptist Church, 965 Cal-Kolola Road, Caledonia, MS 39740.

PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC AND YOUTH. Housing available. Send resume to: Wayne Harris, 6635 CR 436, Water Valley, MS or call (662) 473-4202.

CBF-MS IS SEARCHING FOR A FULL-TIME COORDINATOR. Must be visionary leader, effective communicator, motivator, networker, fundraiser, committed to CBF beliefs and values. Job description available. Send resumes by Jan. 10 to Jane Allison, 12 Sharmont Drive, Hattiesburg, MS 39402, phone (601) 261-3429, email jallison@c-gate.net.

PART-TIME MUSIC DIRECTOR. Send resume to Trinity Baptist Church, 2610 Napoleon Ave., Pearl, MS 39208.



Youth of Spring Hill Church, Waterford

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◆ Dr. Jack Graham
Pastor, Prestonwood Baptist Church
Dallas, TX



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◆ Dr. Gary Cook
President, Dallas Baptist University

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NAMES IN THE NEWS



Joey Patterson and M. L. Waters were ordained as deacons at Central Church, Meridian, on Nov. 5. Pictured (from left) are Leon Ashmore, deacon chairman; Patterson; Waters; and Danny Chisholm, pastor.

Twin Lakes Church, Walls, installed and ordained deacons on Nov. 5. Pictured (from left) are Glenn Norton and John Sullivan, installed deacons; and James Ables and Cecil Blackburn, ordained deacons. Pictured with them is Willard K. Crawley, pastor.



Deacons of Twin Lakes Church, Walls

Glenn Wiggins and Eddie Stokes were ordained as deacons at First Church, Polkville, on Oct. 15. Jeremy Ellis, youth minister of First Church, was ordained to the ministry on Oct. 22.

Branch Church, Scott Association, held a deacon ordination service for Brian Cole Gordon on Sunday, Oct. 22. Officiating were Gayden Harrell, pastor of Roundaway Church, Doddsville; and Michael Giles, pastor of Branch Church, Morton. Pictured are Giles (left) and Gordon (right).



Deacons of Montgomery Church, Summit

Tom Van Norman, Jimmie Harrod, and Glen Moak were ordained as deacons at Montgomery Church, Summit, on Nov. 12. Pictured (from left) are Van Norman, Harrod, Moak, and Tim Parker, pastor.

Gene Richardson was ordained as minister at Unity Church, West, on Sunday, Nov. 5. Pictured with Richardson and his wife Janice is J. D. Hudson, chairman of deacons.



The Richardsons and Hudson



Giles and Gordon

Revival date

New Ireland, Union: Dec. 8 and 9, 7 p.m.; Sunday morning service, 11 a.m.; Kevin Meador, evangelist; W. R. Edgar, pastor.

BAPTIST COLLEGE NEWS

Blue Mountain College (BMC) Department of Music presents the Christmas Carol Concert on Thurs., Dec. 7 at 7:30 p.m. in Garrett Hall Auditorium. The concert will feature the BMC Chorale and Handbell Choir, under the direction of Larry Newell. For additional information, call BMC at (662) 685-4771, ext. 163.

The William Carey College (WCC) Theatre will present the musical "Pinocchio" by Arnold Wengrow with music by Nicky Rea and Jackie Cassada, as its annual play especially for children. Following a tradition of 32 years, the production is co-sponsored by the Hattiesburg Arts Council. The only public performance is scheduled for Saturday, Dec. 9 at 10:30 a.m. in the newly renovated Saenger Theatre located in downtown Hattiesburg. Four separate performances are also scheduled for school groups that week. The production is directed by Shannon Robert of the WCC theatre faculty. Connie

Roberts, associate professor of music, serves as musical director and Hannah Wilkerson serves as assistant musical director. Randall Harris, associate professor of biology, serves as accompanist. Tickets go on sale on Nov. 30 and can be purchased at Bancorp South (Main Office, Kamper Park, and Westwood branches), and the Hattiesburg Arts Council. General admission is \$3.

Marcelo Eduardo has been named Dean of Mississippi College (MC) School of Business, effective Nov. 15. He fills the position formerly held by Lloyd E. Roberts who was named vice president for business affairs at MC earlier this year. Eduardo joined the faculty of MC in 1997 as an associate professor of finance. The fol-

lowing year, he was named chairman of the Business Administration Department. In May of 1999, Eduardo became the associate dean of the School of Business. Prior of going to MC, he was a member of the faculty at Delta State University for 11 years.

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CANCEL SHOWTIME

Editor:

On Sunday, Dec. 3, the Showtime network premiered a new series called "Queer as Folks." According to TV Guide and Time magazines, this new series will feature nudity and overt, undisguised, homosexual acts between both gay men and lesbians. It will also feature a sexual relationship between a 29-year old man and a 17-year old boy.

While I realize that there is probably no way this atrocious material can be stopped, the Bible tells us to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them, for it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret."

The word "fellowship" in that verse, "koinonia," comes from the root word "koinonos," meaning to "share or be associated with" something. We are, then, not to be associated with these things, but rather to rebuke them.

Many of our people have either cable or satellite systems

which include (usually as part of an extra-cost package) the Showtime network. I am asking my people who do to contact their cable or satellite provider and cancel that part of their subscriptions which include Showtime, and inform their carrier that they are doing so to protect this new program. As Christian Action director of Union Association, I am asking you to do likewise.

Thank you for your help.

J. C. Brady

Port Gibson

SORRY ABOUT POTTER

Editor:

While I am in complete agreement with the first part of a resolution taken at our state convention opposing movies targeted for children that contain horror, violence, etc., and profane and sexually oriented music, I am very sorry that it was deemed necessary to include the Harry Potter series. Having personally read these books, I do not judge them to be in any way promoting the

occult or containing elements of New Age religion.

I would like to share with you the feeling of Deloy Chapman, minister of music and media at the First Church, Oak Grove, Mo. I quote from a recent letter of his:

"... I read the Harry Potter books (at the request of the ladies from our Media Center). I (told) them they are harmless enough, but that each parent should read the books first (not just read someone's opinion on them), then make a decision. If they don't like them, steer their children to books like Susan Cooper's The Dark Is Rising series, or Madeleine L'Engle's A Swiftly Tilting Planet series, or C.S. Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia. These are award winning children's books that deal tremendously with "supernatural events." The Harry Potter books are much like these books. Very whimsical, good vs. evil, etc.

"Anyone can pick apart... stories from Greek mythology, fairy tales, etc. and make them "anti-Christian" (because they deal with) witches, mermaids, giants. These are merely stories.

Even ... an elementary-age child (understands that)."

Cecile Alexander
Clinton

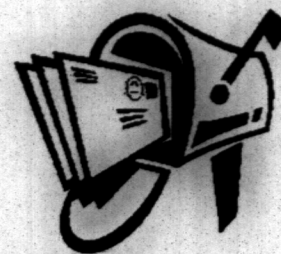
CHRISTMAS IN APRIL?

Editor:

Everyone has heard of Christmas in August, but Christmas in April? That's how we felt when our prayers were answered last April and my husband, Larry, received a liver transplant that would save his life. I cannot think of a better time of year or a better way to honor our Savior than to become an organ/tissue donor. The procedure is simple—first, sign your driver's license, but more importantly, tell your family that you wish to be an organ donor.

During this season of gift-giving when we celebrate the birth of the One who gives us Eternal Life, please consider doing what I know Jesus would have us do—give the Gift of Life.

From one who has been on the receiving end,
Joyce Norris
Petal



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Unsigned letters will not be printed. No multi-copy or form letters will be used.

Each correspondent must include an address and telephone number for verification. In special instances, name may be withheld at writer's request and editor's discretion.

Please include the name of cooperating Mississippi Baptist church where correspondent is a member. (Mississippi Baptists' letters will receive priority when space is limited.)

Letters must be limited to 250 words. All correspondence is subject to editing.

Correspondents should refrain from personal attacks. The opinions expressed in letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

No more than one letter from any individual will be printed during a three-month period.

When in the judgement of the editor a given issue has received sufficient attention, correspondence dealing with it will no longer be published and a notice will be printed to that effect.

Am. Red Cross, NAMB forge disaster agreement

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP)—The American Red Cross signed an agreement with the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board (NAMB) Nov. 2 that continues a longstanding disaster relief partnership between the agencies, a partnership that last year resulted in a combined savings

of an estimated \$14 million.

The "statement of understanding" is the third since 1986 to address formally a relationship that has existed since 1970. The partnership has allowed Southern Baptist disaster relief units to work closely with the American Red Cross in meal preparation, child care, cleanup

and recovery after major storms, and in other efforts.

New items addressed in the agreement include a formal description of the existing relationship between the two organizations in chaplaincy services and "aviation incident response."

John Clizbe, vice president for disaster relief services for the American Red Cross, commended Southern Baptist efforts as a model of how non-profit organizations can work together synergistically.

"We value this relationship enormously," he said before a public signing of the agreement at NAMB's offices in Alpharetta, Ga. "When I have been asked for an example of a statement of understanding and sympathy for the American Red Cross, I almost always refer to our relationship with you [NAMB]. It is the epitome of how a good working relationship should be formed and what it is all about."

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FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

Unfolding plan

Luke 1:26-35, 38; Matt. 1:18-21

By Sharon Neff

Sin. It's an ugly little three-letter word. Actually it's a word that we don't often hear, but that we see evidence of all the time. People call it error, character flaw, wrongdoing, failing, or indiscretion. No matter how you try to gloss over it or dress it up to make it look better, in the end it's just plain sin.

As we grow from innocent childhood toward responsible adulthood, we usually discover that there are two dirty little secrets of sin.

The first is that while sin may be fun for a while, it produces guilt that we have to deal with. The second secret is that everyone sins. We learn the first secret from our own experience and the second from the Word

of God ("For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," Rom. 3:23).

This is Christmas — the season of warm, fuzzy feelings, of peace and goodwill. Why are we talking about sin? Because in the midst of the gifts and celebration of the season, we need to remember that the tiny baby in the manger was God's Son — his gift to us to save us from our sin and deliver us from our guilt.

For Jesus to be our Savior, he had to be the perfect sacrifice. He had to be all God and all man as well as completely without sin or a sin nature from the moment of conception.

We see how this came about as Luke records the angel's announcement of the impending birth to Mary.



Neff

It is stated several times that Mary was a virgin and when Mary asked how she would become pregnant, the angel answered "The Holy Spirit will come upon you" (Luke 1:35). Instinctively, Mary seemed to know that this would not be a normal conception.

The sin nature of Adam comes to each one of us through our natural fathers who transmit their fallen nature to their offspring, so this special Child could not have a natural father.

In a mysterious way that it is not for us to understand completely, divinity and humanity came together in her body to conceive a sinless Child who was fully human as well as fully divine.

After hearing the message of the angel, Mary, mature and wise beyond her years, graciously accepted this unique role as mother of the Savior of the world (v. 38).

Now we turn to Joseph, who was betrothed to Mary (which in that culture meant that they were virtually married but the final ceremony had not taken place and the relationship had not been consummated physically).

After discovering that Mary was pregnant and knowing that he was not the father, Joseph pondered his options. During this time, he too received a visit from an angel.

The angel explained about the circumstances of his beloved Mary's pregnancy, confirming what she had probably told him about the child being conceived by the Holy Spirit. Joseph was also told the purpose of this Child's life — "He will save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).

What a message that must have been! Comforting, exciting, sobering, and frightening all in one. Joseph would be able to take Mary as his wife and he would be the foster father of the Savior.

Like Mary, he graciously accepted this privilege and

responsibility from God and immediately completed the marriage ceremony. He took Mary into his home as his wife, but had no sexual relations with her until after Jesus was born.

Jesus, whose name means "the Lord saves," was born as the perfect sacrifice, born to redeem us, born to die for our sins.

In the midst of all of the sweetness of the Baby, the serenity and beauty of Mary, and the caring and strength of Joseph that we see depicted during this Christmas season, remember the reason for his birth.

One of my favorite recent Christmas songs says it this way: **Fragile finger sent to heal us, Tender brow prepared for thorn, Tiny heart whose blood will save us,*

Unto us is born, unto us is born.

Neff is a member of First Church, Greenville.

*From "Welcome To Our World", written by Chris Rice, c1995 by Clumsy Fly Music (ASCAP), admin. by Rocketown Music LLC.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Wise witnessing

Acts 17:16, 22-34

By Lee Yancey

Meeting people where they were was a key to Paul's witnessing strategy. He always found out something about the people to whom he was speaking. Usually he would go to the Jewish synagogue when he entered a city and begin with their common Jewish background.

People in the synagogue could relate to Moses and the prophets. It was a subject with which they were comfortable. In Athens, Paul saw all the different idols that the people worshiped and noticed an altar to the unknown god.

Paul appealed to the people's religiosity as he spoke. They could relate to religious practice. Through this common ground, his listeners paid attention as he made known "the unknown god" to them.

We must be wise in our witnessing, not slamming people in the head with a Bible, but by finding common ground, so that we can lead them to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Assess religious pluralism (17:16). While Paul was waiting for Silas and Timothy in Athens he decided to take a tour of the city. He was greatly distressed to see so many idols that the citizens of Athens worshiped as gods. Athens was known as a diverse center of religious expression.

Two groups called the Epicureans and the Stoics were very dominant in the city. The Epicureans believed that seeking happiness or pleasure was the primary goal of life. By contrast, the Stoics placed thinking above feeling and tried to live in harmony with nature and reason, suppressing their desire



Yancey

for pleasure. Thus they were very disciplined.

Paul had grown up as a very religious man. He understood the meaning of discipline but he also knew that all these people were living apart from the knowledge of Almighty God. He was tremendously burdened that they were wasting their lives with meaningless ritual and were destined for a fiery hell.

Today, we live in a place that is not unlike Athens. May we, like Paul, be greatly distressed at the idol worship around us. May we be wise in our witnessing so that we can share the light of Jesus Christ to a lost and dying world.

Acknowledge religious interest (17:22-23). As a result of Paul's witnessing to different religious leaders (Epicureans, Stoics, and others), they invited him to speak to their assembly to clarify his views.

These religious thinkers did nothing but talk about and listen to the latest ideas. Paul was a novelty to them. His views were fresh and he was very well educated.

At Aeropagus (Mars Hill, KJV), Paul acknowledged the religious interest of his audience. He spoke about walking through their city and seeing all the different idols, focusing particularly on one they called TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.

Archaeological discoveries have yielded evidence of altars to unknown gods. Paul used something found in their city to proclaim Christ to them. What was previously an unknown god, he made known to them as the one true God.

Wise witnessing begins by addressing unbelievers at their present level of understanding.

Present religious truth (17:24-31). Speaking before a group of intellectual thinkers, Paul had to be at his best. He began by presenting God's nature as both transcendent (17:24-25, cannot be contained by anything made by humankind) and immanent (17:27-28, always close by).

Paul used the Athenian's language and poetry in explaining religious truth to them but compromised neither the basic truth of God as Creator and Judge nor the resurrection of Christ.

His emphasis on the gospel's call to repentance and faith in Christ (17:29-31) must be noted. Paul gave them the whole gospel, not a watered-down version to tickle their ears.

Wise witnessing begins by addressing unbelievers at their present level of understanding.

Weigh religious responses (17:32-34). Among the Greek philosophers, the Epicureans denied life after death. The Stoics taught survival after death but denied the resurrection of the body. Many of them refused to accept Paul's message.

With the unbelievers, Paul sensed immediately that the idea of resurrection struck discord among the Greek intellectuals. However, he was able to win to faith in Christ one member of the Aeropagus, Dionysius, a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.

A wise witness recognizes that responses to Christ are varied and that the believer's responsibility is to be faithful as a witness and leave the results to God.

Yancey is consultant for the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission.

Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events and activities in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News items for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper or (b) submitted electronically. All articles must be accompanied by a return address.

News items submitted electronically must be accompanied by a return address of an e-mail address to insure delivery and to protect against virus threats.



All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. News items will be returned to the sender by airmail.

For more information, contact the Editor, Baptist Record, P.O. Box 100, Memphis, TN 38101. E-mail: baptistrecord@mcbr.org

THE VILLAGE VIEW



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Gifts of Honor and Memory

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

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Extremists arrested in Tajik church bombing

DUSHANBE, Tajikistan (BP) — Three Muslim extremists have been arrested and interrogated about a church bombing in Tajikistan that killed at least nine members of the church and injured more than 70 others.

The Korean-led Sonmin Grace Church located in Tajikistan's capital, Dushanbe, was bombed Oct. 1 as church members gathered for Sunday worship.

The first bomb exploded on the third floor. The second bomb, located under the stairwell, was timed to detonate as people evacuated the building.

According to the Russian ITAR-Tass news service, the explosions "tore the doors off their hinges, shattered the windows, and turned the furniture into splinters."

A third bomb, which failed to detonate, was found in the church basement. A police spokesman said one of the bombs equaled eight pounds of dynamite.

Authorities did not allow anyone to visit the gutted building for a week. Once it was reopened, international aid workers, concerned Christians, and representatives from the U.S. embassy toured

act of terrorism possibly instigated by Islamic militants, local Tajik authorities initially arrested 12 church leaders as suspects.

All the Christians detained after the bombing have been freed, though some remain under virtual house arrest because their official documents have not been returned.

The released church leaders said they were questioned about the bombing, but also were interrogated about their Christian faith and any plans they had for evangelization.

Some were asked to deny their faith in exchange for release.

Physicians from international aid organizations and concerned Christians were not allowed to visit or help church members who were hospitalized.

Tajikistan's minister of health said no one was to see the victims in order to protect them from the attackers, who might return to kill survivors.

The suspected bombers are students at an Islamic institute. They are described as "religious fanatics" who are connected with two other attacks.

The bombing was not the first time Christians have come under attack in this country where more than 90% of the people claim to be Muslim.

Threats had previously been made against Sonmin Grace Church and its pastor, Korean-American Yun Seop Choi.



MARTYRS' BLOOD — Faint blood spatters can be seen on this painting of Jesus, which hangs in Sonmin Grace Church in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. At least nine church members were killed and more than 70 were injured when a bomb exploded during Sunday worship Oct. 1. (BP photo)

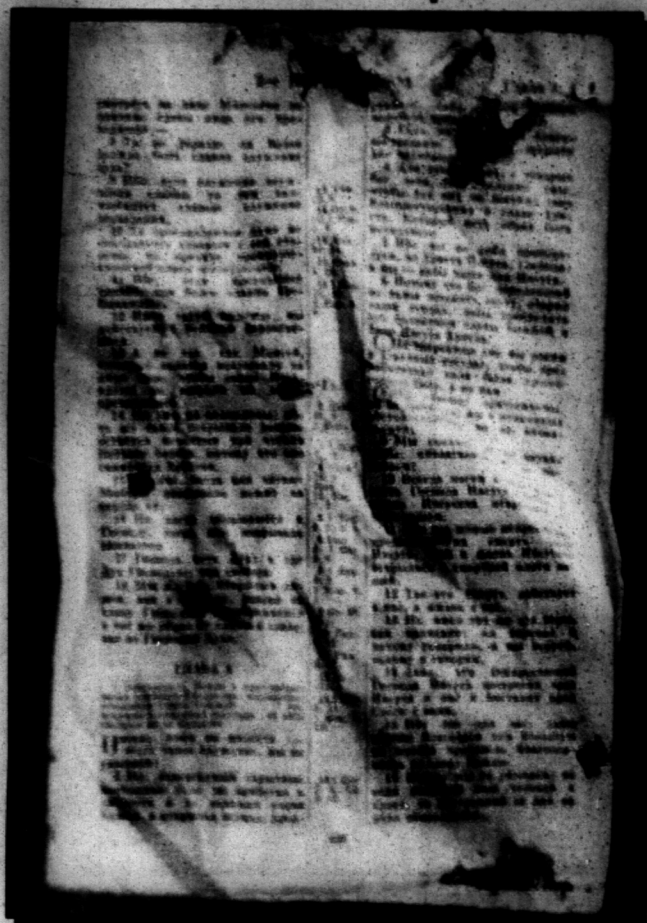
Compass Direct news service reported that police raided three worship meetings last fall, arrested church members and confiscated literature as punishment for "illegal missionary activity."

In November, representatives of the government's Committee for Religious Affairs told the church its active ministry might cause the congregation to lose its state registration.

"The KGB and others have been threatening this [church] group for months," a Dushanbe resident told Compass Direct.

Tajikistan is still recovering after a five-year civil war that ended in 1997 with a peace agreement between the neo-communist government and an Islamic-inspired opposition.

Since then, traditional Muslims have steadily gained power in the country. More than 95% of the 6 million Tajiks are Sunni Muslims.



NOT ABANDONED — This blood-spattered Bible was open to 2 Corinthians 4 when a bomb exploded Oct. 1 at Sonmin Grace Church in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. Circled on the page are verses 7-9, which read in part: "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed" (NIV). (BP photo)

Bibliocipher

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OBQ LURB JR GFOBQ
CDOJBVS, TADSVHR, VT JR
UOHR AISUF OSOVBGF
OBJ; FUOF JAID TOFURD
OYGA LUVPU VG VB
UROHRB ZOJ TADSVHR
JAI JAID FDRGCOGGRG.

ZODM RYHRB:

FLRBFJ-TVHR

Clue: T = F

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Micah Seven: Two.

the church's remains.

"I can't quite describe the feeling of seeing a mural of our Lord, spattered with the blood of his martyrs," said one friend of the church, "but I can rest in knowing that the blood of martyrs is the seed of the church. Build your church, Lord!"

Local community groups collected donations of food and clothing to help support families that lived in the bombed area.

International aid agencies donated money, medicine and clothes. U.S. government representatives were so touched that they collected personal money to help the survivors.

While the Russian newspapers called the bombing an



BOMBING AFTERMATH — Blood stains the floor of the Sonmin Grace Church in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, where at least nine church members were killed and more than 70 were injured by an Oct. 1 double bomb blast. Authorities arrested three Islamic extremists in connection with the case. (BP photo)

Muslims in U.S. increasingly involved in politics

WASHINGTON (BP) — Muslim voters, though relatively few in number, could play a disproportionately big role in the current close presidential election.

Experts say there are as many as 6 million Muslims in the U.S. More Muslims were expected to vote this election than ever before.

There has been a big change of attitude in the Muslim community to get more politically involved, Salam Al-Marayati of the Muslim Public Affairs Council told Religion & Ethics Newsweekly, a public television program.

Some Muslims still have religious objections to political involvement, arguing that the Koran forbids it, or they have felt it wouldn't do any good to vote.

Many others interpret the Muslim sacred text as encouraging voting, and they plan to go to the polls, according to news reports.

American Muslims feel they can influence U.S. policy on the Middle East, which they regard as too pro-Israel.

Other common concerns are school vouchers and charter schools, sanctions on Iraq, Muslim civil rights, and abortion, a national survey in February found, according to the Dallas Morning News.

Muslim religious leaders are pushing their followers to fill out voter registration cards. Special displays went up at mosques around the country this fall urging Muslims to vote.

Leaders of several Muslim organizations have banded

together to promote voter registration within their communities, according to Religion & Ethics Newsweekly, although most have not offered any guidance on who to vote for.

The profile of American Muslims has been raised in public life in the last several years.

Muslim leaders have been welcomed in the White House. Muslim leader Maher Hathout gave a benediction at the Republican National Convention earlier this year.

Reform Party candidate Pat Buchanan addressed the American Muslim Council meeting this summer, telling delegates he shares many values with them.

Muslims are divided politically within their own communities. Many are recent immi-

grants who come from different political backgrounds and ethnic groups and are split in their political affiliations.

Imam Warith Deen Mohammed, leader of the American Muslim Society and a man known for bringing races and religions together, spoke at an interfaith gathering Oct. 22 in Fort Worth, Texas. His topic was racism that is caused by religion, according to the Fort Worth Star-Telegram.

Mohammed told the crowd that too often sacred scriptures are used to divide religious people.

He drew a link between the Torah, the Bible, and the Koran, saying the Jewish and Christian texts provide the foundation for the teachings of the Muslim faith.